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Will Rumania Attend the Mediterranean Conference?

A consultative conference of "Communist and progressive parties of the area" on security in the Mediterranean is slated to be held in Rome on 22 January, according to a 10 January article in the Italian socialist newspaper, Avanti. The long awaited conference is to draw up a common platform on Mediterranean problems and to set up a preparatory committee for a subsequent general conference on Mediterranean questions. The Yugoslavs and the Algerians have been the principal forces behind the meeting.

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COMMENT: The Avanti article appeared shortly after talks on 5 January between Carlo Galluzzi, a foreign relations specialist in the Italian Communist Party, and Rumanian party and state chief Ceausescu and his leading advisers. The Ceausescu delegation had just concluded talks with Yugoslav President Tito in Belgrade on 3-4 January and met with Galluzzi at Timisoara in Rumania. On 8 January, Galluzzi also talked with the leading international affairs specialist of the Yugoslav party.

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Whether or not Galluzzi's discussions with the Rumanians mean that Bucharest will send representatives to the Rome conference is unclear. What is clear, however, is that Rumanian participation in such a meeting, if only in an observer status, would be consistent with Bucharest's sharply stepped-up contacts with "progressive parties" and with its independent course. The Rumanians also have long been advocates for a denuclearized region, and the Avanti article's reference to participation by "Communist and progressive parties of the area" is sufficiently vague to include the Rumanians.

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#### Belgrade Approves Negotiations with Bonn

The Yugoslav government has formally approved opening negotiations with West Germany on the establishment of diplomatic relations. No time or place for the talks has been announced.

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COMMENT: The Yugoslavs prefer a neutral site, such as Paris or Vienna, for the preparatory talks. Although Belgrade is savoring this long-awaited diplomatic victory, it will be disappointed at Bonn's decision that talks on the status of Yugoslav workers in West Germany cannot begin until at least March.

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#### Signing of Bulgarian-Rumanian Friendship Treaty Postponed

Rumanian party leader Ceaurescu will not travel to Sofia to sign the new friendship treaty as originally scheduled for this month. Unreconciled differences between the Bulgarian and Rumanian drafts as well as preparations for Bulgarian party leader Zhivkov's trip to Cuba have forced the postponement.

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COMMENT: Bulgarian and Rumanian officials reportedly exchanged drafts on 21 December in preparation for the formalization of the treaty in January. The new treaty will be the first renewal by Rumania with any of its Warsaw Pact allies and replaces the twenty-year bilateral friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance treaty signed in January

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1948. The old agreement committed the co-signatories to mutual defense against aggression and the current snag in negotiations probably stems from Rumania's distaste for mutual defense commitments.

### Polish Episcopate and Catholic Leftists Exchange Blows

Pax, a pro-regime Catholic political organization, has said the Polish church hierarchy was guilty of "hindering understanding between the Vatican and the Polish state government." The organization's newspaper also reprinted a communique from the Episcopate which had accused Pax and its president, Boleslaw Piasecki, of "unscrupulous attacks on the church hierarchy for political ends." Pax's reply, claiming that an "understanding between the Vatican and Poland would be in the interests of both state and church," appeared along side the Episcopate's article.

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COMMENT: This may be the opening volley of another round of recriminations between Pax and the Episcopate. During such low-key exchanges in the past, Pax has by proxy represented the regime. As far as we know, the regime has not made recent attempts to reach an accord with the Vatican.

### Bulgaria May Decrease Exports to Hungary

Bulgaria may cut back its exports to Hungary in an effort to adjust past imbalances in Bulgaria's favor. On 9 December, Hungarian deputy minister of foreign trade Jeno Tordai and his Bulgarian counterpart, Ivan Nedev, signed the 1968 trade protocol between the two countries. Press releases after the signing of the protocol did not mention the usual increase in trade.

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COMMENT: Since CEMA trade is all on a barter basis and deficits now exist only on paper, there is no real advantage for Sofia in increasing Hungary's trade deficit with Bulgaria. On the other hand, if Hungary cuts down on its imports in certain areas, and if its industry can take up the slack, the reduction in imports may help to keep down unemployment during the initial stage of the economic reform.

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